



Course Report 2015

Subject	Photography
Level	Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Project

The Project is worth 100 marks in total and has three Sections.

Section 1, Research and Investigation, 25 marks.

Section 2, Development and Production, 60 marks.

Section 3, Evaluation, 15 marks.

The range of responses to the Project was varied and creative, and on the whole centres have responded well to the new Higher.

Some centres used the 'old' themes. This was fine. However, some candidates used the genre themes from the unit work without explaining how they planned to develop this beyond the unit.

Presentation styles varied, with the most successful being the simplest. Complex mounting and framing added little if anything to the final presentations.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Project

In some cases candidates set themselves projects that they struggled to achieve with the resources at their disposal. At times the plans and proposals lacked a structure that indicated how or where or when the candidates would achieve their targets.

If candidates propose to use the theme 'My World', they must be very clear in the proposal what they are trying to achieve. This theme does not simply mean random images related to their lives.

Research should be related directly to the selected theme to gain marks. Candidates must engage not only with their own work but also with the selected research, otherwise the selected images are just padding to the workbook. Engagement is not just saying if you 'like' the images, it is about making comment on how and why the selected images impact on your approach/style/understanding, etc.

In any project, it must be obvious how and why decisions were made. Therefore, the whole project must flow from the proposal to the evaluation, with the candidate at all times making it obvious to the viewer what decisions have been taken.

Candidates must remember that an evaluation is not just a narrative passage — it is where the candidate can reflect on what they have gained and where they did not achieve as they had hoped. The evaluation should be totally honest — if something has gone wrong, this is the

point to discuss it; this is the candidate's opportunity to show their depth of understanding about all the elements of the Project.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Project

Research work was, in most cases, extensive and on theme. Candidates also used research to highlight specific areas they wished to develop.

Development work was at times excellent where candidates had used contact sheets and clear engagement to show their choices and direction to the project

Print quality at times was excellent when photographic quality materials were used. Printed books were good, but candidates must remember to ensure that the images sent to the printer are in the correct colour space.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Project

Some plans lacked focus and it was difficult to know what the candidate planned to do. The plan should be where the candidate indicates 'what', 'how', 'when' and 'with whom', in their Project.

Research is more than a couple of pages of downloaded material. Where downloads are used, these must show engagement, otherwise they are only padding. Candidates are allowed to look at more than two photographers in the process of research.

The process of selection of images to arrive at the final 12 must be clear. Lack of contact sheets or equivalent makes this process difficult. Candidates should not jump from Project shoots to the final selection without showing how and why they made these decisions.

Final prints can have borders or be borderless, but using 'fit to screen' and leaving a border top and bottom or on either side is unacceptable. Prints can be mounted, but they do not have to be, and the use of low quality black paper did nothing to enhance images. Rarely is black ever used to mount prints as this draws colour away from the image.

Overuse of the ability to sharpen images should be avoided. Candidates should address the technical issue of focus — this is a basic factor in all images. Shallow depth of field can be used where appropriate, but candidates must use some sort of focus within the image.

Annotation of research or development needs to be more than 'like' or 'dislike'.

Photographic terminology needs to be used appropriately throughout the Project.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Project

The Project is totally separate from the unit work. The Project must stand alone as a developed body of work; reference can of course be made to the techniques and genres investigated in the units.

Greater guidance needs to be given to candidates over the evaluation section. This must not be a merely narrative piece, but should be the candidate's opportunity to reflect on their Project. This element, although not directed by a word count, should be long enough to draw all the threads of the Project together in an evaluative manner.

Print quality, when non-photographic materials were used, was poor. This should be avoided. There were some excellent examples of laser prints, but these were overwhelmed by the number of poor laser print submissions.

Ensure that plans and proposals are not in the past tense.

Print size is between A5 and A4; a number of presentations came in as A6 or A3.

The candidate's final selection of images must appear somewhere in the development work.

Candidates should be reminded that using images from the internet for research is acceptable with appropriate attribution. However, using images from the internet for their final presentation is not acceptable.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	0
Number of resulted entries in 2015	1048

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	34.0%	34.0%	356	70
B	27.8%	61.7%	291	60
C	23.5%	85.2%	246	50
D	4.5%	89.7%	47	45
No award	10.3%	-	108	0

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.